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EDUCATION OF JUVENILE DELINQUENTS

The modern educational idea has been more fully developed and more consistently carried out in boarding schools for delinquent children than in any other educational institutions.

The questions of the treatment of juvenile delinquents has occupied the thoughts of humane people for several generations. The first efforts were primarily to save young offenders from the demoralizing effects of association with older criminals in jails and prisons. The earliest institutions for juvenile delinquents were organized under the dominance of the prison idea. It may be true that such was not the conscious intention on the part of the pioneers of this work, who took it up long before the States were sufficiently alive to its importance to enter into it. But, nevertheless, the fact remains that when looked upon as history, there was present in the earlier provisions for the detention and care of children committed for violation of law most of the characteristics of prison treatment of adults and few characteristics properly belonging to a *regimen* of education and development.

In all regards was this true; the establishments were distinctively prison enclosures, the dormitories were blocks of cells, the dining-rooms were chambers of silence with only the meagerest provision of the rudest table furniture, the earning capacity of those confined was exploited to its highest possible figure, and education in letters was only provided for during such hours as could not be profitably employed in work; and the greatest ambition and strongest claim for popular approval was a low per capita cost of maintenance.

The lack of public enlightenment and the state of the public conscience were responsible for this condition, and it is probable that if one had been sufficiently in advance of the common thought upon these subjects to have sought or demanded much more than was the actual practice, the whole effort would have been defeated.

With the change in social conditions incident to increased wealth, culture and general uplifting of ideals in the people, there was not for some time an equal progress within the high walls surrounding the unfortunate young. The very physical aspect of

these refuges warded off the general influences that were at work in the body of the people. So distinct were they that few considered the possibility of their being a part of the community to which the rising tide of better standards could bring as great changes as it was doing to the rest of the community. Consequently, very nearly the same standard of conduct persisted for a somewhat longer period than was entirely justifiable in some of these older institutions.

The public, and in a large degree those in charge of the establishments, looked upon them as workshops in which misshapen and faulty products of the social system were to be forced by special moral and more or less mechanical means into perfect condition. They were called *reform schools*, and were supposed to have at command some occult means of *reforming*; and even now it is not uncommon to hear erudite discussions as to the efficacy of this or that as a reformatory agency.

The advanced ideas on educational methods in the public schools for a long time had little influence in the schools for delinquents. The idea that whatever education was given was a favor bestowed, for which the young recipient should be properly thankful, and for which he should be willing to sacrifice every opportunity to gratify the natural impulses of childhood, was long dominant in practice, if never quite so baldly stated.

But within the last generation or two, mostly within the last, a very pronounced change has taken place in representative schools for delinquents. New men, with different standards concerning the obligation that the community owes to its children, and with different personal standards and attainments, have come into the active management and administration of these schools. Where, as formerly, the few hours spent in indifferently conducted school-rooms, mayhap before breakfast and after supper, were considered and spoken of as the time devoted to education, now every hour of the twenty-four is considered as important educationally as any particular hour.

The change from the walled schools to the more rational form of cottage organization made possible the realization of the more advanced ideas of education in these schools. As long as the psychology influence of prison conditions and prison ideas bore down upon

the young minds it was impossible for administrators even to conceive rational treatment of the young lives. The condition of the mind of the pupil so mirrored itself in his every resultant manifestation of character that optimistic, indeed, would have been the manager who could have freed himself from the old idea that he had a monstrous thing to deal with, which it was his duty to fuse with ardent heat and re-cast into some normal shape. The influence of the unvalled schools, however, penetrated even those still behind barriers, and conditions were very much ameliorated, so that when the real work of educational study and development began, there were few institutions that did not sooner or later enter into the scheme with more or less enthusiasm and zeal.

As was natural, these boarding-schools for delinquents, after awaking to the possibility and need, at first tried to copy and to conform rigidly to the public school grades and standards. In the public school no allowances are made for grades of capacity. Provision is made for a dead level of capacity of an arbitrarily determined pupil, and each pupil of the grade is furnished with a given amount of information in a given time. If the capacity of the pupil is in excess of the supply furnished by the grade it is his misfortune, as failure to work to the top of his bent is sure to prevent increase of capacity to work, and is likely to decrease it. If the pupil lacks capacity to assimilate the amount of information required by his grade, constant failure to accomplish what is expected of him and the periodical shocks from demotion or failure of promotion numb his courage and really decrease his capacity. Indeed, in spite of all of the honest effort to use those methods of teaching which shall result in the best mental development of the child, the real work of the public school is imparting the amount of knowledge necessary to pass to the next grade in the educational scheme when the annual or semi-annual promotion takes place. This statement is not made in criticism of the public school system, but it is only given to indicate that the development of the education of delinquents should be differentiated from what is, perhaps, the necessary conditions of the common schools.

In the later and present stage of educational development, it has been recognized that the opportunities offered at the boarding-schools are far in advance of those possessed by the day schools;

and, as the schools for delinquents are boarding-schools, their educational system has been evolved upon the basis of twenty-four hours in the day being considered as the time devoted to the purpose. In other words, the whole life of the pupil, even his time of rest, is directed and utilized in developing all the possibilities of his nature.

The first formulated conclusion reached concerning the pupils of the school for delinquents was that the large majority of them were backward in mental education. One of three causes was assignable for this condition. Lack of capacity, lack of opportunity, or lack of application under the previous conditions of education.

Supposing the defectives to be eliminated from those classed as lacking capacity, it was necessary to discover the cause of, and the remedy for, this seeming deficiency. In many cases it was found that what had been called lack of capacity was only a degree of power to apprehend and retain instruction somewhat below the arbitrary, average standard set up by the public school system. In other cases, it was found that the mind had been dwarfed by unfavorable physical or psychological influences. In other cases perfectly average powers were possessed in some faculties, while there was lack in others.

When a study was made of those classed as having lacked opportunity, it was found that the failure to apply the mind to systematic study had begotten a mental state very similar to that of those who had been considered as lacking capacity, but that there was greater constitutional power of mentation if the same could only be developed.

Those who were supposed to have had good ability and favoring opportunities appeared, when closely considered, to have failed in application because of a mental attitude of indifference to results of slothfulness, very properly attributable to low standards of life acquired in the home or in the daily associations outside of the home. This attitude, persisted in, notwithstanding the efforts of home and school government, showed the absence of discipline and reverence for authority which should be found in the child, and which it is absolutely essential should be present in every child's mind who is even reasonably educated. The result had been that the same condition of mind had grown up as in the preceding class.

When the laborious inquiry, classification and consideration had

been completed it was discovered that the initial treatment indicated for all classes was practically the same. First, the physical condition was considered, as it must be the basis for all future work of child development. It was found that all of the three classes of delinquents had much in common. Bad, irregular, improper or scanty meals had resulted in badly nourished bodies; while lack of proper physical exercise and due and regular amounts of sleep had resulted in low physical condition—not necessarily famished or emaciated bodies—but lack of strength, sluggish circulation and bad mental and physical correlation. Mental activity was also discovered to be sluggish. Apart from a certain animal acumen, perception was found slow, determination slower, and motor response quite tardy. Indeed, the whole study of the subject led to a fixed conclusion that any true education of the class to be dealt with would involve systematic treatment of the whole life of the patients, as the subjects may be properly called.

Physical occupation must take a new place in the institution curriculum. It is necessary that the brain be in the best physical condition, as a part of a buoyant body, fed by rich blood circulating evenly through every organ. To realize this, the body must receive first and careful attention. The old policy that work, if hard enough, is good exercise, was first attacked, and the newer notion that, in order to give full exercise, systematic and carefully planned work was necessary, was given the standing of an axiom. Inasmuch as no productive work could be found which fulfilled the requirements, some form or other of physical training which was body building in its nature was found or devised. Dismissing the inane, lifeless, calisthenics, called exercise in some places, as a mere continuity breaker, many schools turned to military drill with the regulation setting-up exercise. Indeed, nothing better could well be found, as far as they go. In them there is no grinding work done as exercise, but physical occupation, with an object in view other than the work itself; hence giving the surest promise of the desired result primary in the mind of the guiding intelligence but entirely unrecognized in the mind of the pupil. In the mind of the careful observer, however, there remained something to be desired in perfecting the physical treatment of the children, and regular gymnastic drills, under competent instruction and oversight, have been turned to as

the best fulfillment of the end desired. There should not be long periods of monotonous class-drills, but also apparatus work, in which the character of play is instilled by the strife to excel. These means, and the stimulation of a morning shower bath, are relied upon to give a physical buoyancy and health to every part of the body, including the brain, that will insure the highest effort and the best attainment in the struggle for development. The results now obtained where this system is fully carried out have not been disappointing in any respect, but have so impressed some observers that the question, whether it would not be profitable to devote a few weeks to this physical drill before attempting anything in the line of avowedly mental training, has been raised. The word avowedly is used advisedly, as what is called mere physical exercise has been found to have the highest value as mental and moral training.

The first pronounced mental characteristic of delinquent children is comparative slowness of apprehension and corresponding slowness of physical response in action. From the first day in the awkward squad, or the gymnasium class, the beginner is drilled in quickness of perception and promptness of decision and action. One need not be a skilled observer to note the fact first stated, or to be surprised by the results every day demonstrated. Neither can it be claimed that these are only the automatic exhibition of habit, because the requirements are too numerous, too varied and too variously grouped to be complied with without concentration of attention and conscious mental action in nearly every case. And when the drills are ordered and conducted by bugle calls and to music, a third element requiring further mental alertness, and one more step of interpretation between perception and the completed notion and its realization in action, is introduced. In addition, that highly moral obligation of obedience to a superior authority without question, and that other social virtue in which the individual is sunk in the whole and shines as part of the whole, are constantly making their impress upon the child's mind without either his knowledge or protest. Then, too, as a responsible part of a great whole, while the individual is learning his relative unimportance, he may suddenly be shocked to learn how vitally important to the whole is every component part; how the performance of each individual affects the performance of the whole by seeing the coveted

honor of carrying a regiment's flag, for which companies are competing, sacrificed by the wandering thought of some comrade who has allowed his attention to be distracted for a moment. Every one of his mates will at once become a lecturer on the subject, and for all the time he remains in the school he may hear new pupils exhorted to attention by the story of how the culprit "lost the flag," by having one finger too few or too many on the certain part of his piece at a given time.

In the scheme of this physical toning-up, with incidental effects upon the mind, play and physical relaxation are not forgotten. For in the careless excitement of vigorous sports a degree of strenuous exertion, calling into play the last ounce of physical power and mental alertness that is being developed under the physical training of the system above outlined, is called forth, and results are obtained, both physical and mental, not otherwise obtainable.

It will be evident to any one familiar with the best systems in vogue in the best boarding-schools that the special study of this special class of pupils has resulted in the adoption of a system precisely similar to, if not exactly the same as, that in these most widely separated classes of schools. Hence, if it be claimed that the characteristics of the delinquent pupils upon which the system has been declared are of determining importance, nevertheless the value of the method of development for any pupil is proven by its general use under the most eminent educators of normal youth.

We now pass from a class of things that are not done for their own sake, nor for their direct influence upon the mental operations of the pupils, to a class of efforts performed for their own sakes, and particularly for the effects that they may have upon the minds of the subjects as regards mental and moral activity.

All now agree that commercial work can have no place in the scheme, but there is an apparent difference of opinion as to whether the work should be entirely constructive or, for those of suitable age, instructive also. But as the difference of opinion is more theoretical than practical, it need not swerve us from our statement of the present practice in the education of delinquents. Little is heard now of the work done simply for the purpose of teaching habits of industry, as that is an inevitable result of occupation that excites interest; any other only engenders a distaste for work.

For those who are old enough to acquire knowledge of some mechanical trade, the custom is now all but universal to teach building trades and printing, and where there is an estate large enough to require many draught animals and vehicles, blacksmithing. In the first place, the trades are selected because no greater mental preparation is required than the pupils generally have; in the second place, because actual work of a useful kind can be furnished, and only such work can be of any possible interest to the learner; in the third place, because in prosecuting any of these trades, a certain amount of mental concentration and reasoning is in constant play with stimulating pride and satisfaction arising from the useful results being accomplished; and finally, because the instruction received is an asset available in after years when the struggle for existence is undertaken. Other trades might be equally well adapted to the purposes intended so far as the mental stimulus given by, and the manual dexterity required for, their prosecution.

For those that are younger, Sloyd, or some modification of it, furnishes the same means of mental stimulation through manual training. And for occupation, light outside work that brings the worker into contact with nature fills the need. There is, of course, occasionally a class so young that it requires no occupation other than care-free childish sport.

The scheme of education so far outlined has aimed at the development of a healthy brain condition, so as to make normal mental action possible, and also at exciting mental activity, right conception and proper correlation of ideas, while at the same time giving useful information and skill to use it. The next step in the education is the school of letters. While it is common to consider all that has gone before in the light of its bearing upon the work in letters, and while it is true that all that has preceded affects this work most pronouncedly, the physical and manual training have been of the highest value in themselves, as has been indicated.

The school of letters should be as unique as the school of physical and manual training. The first step to be taken is to put into separate classes pupils of the same grade differing widely in age and physical development. Boys who have reached considerable size and maturity of mind cannot be advantageously taught in the same classes with small and immature children, even when they all are

equally advanced in school studies. The older student, because of greater maturity, can acquire knowledge much faster than the younger when attention and application are once secured, provided, of course, there is the same approach to the normal in their mental capacity. It is a disadvantageous embarrassment also for a child to find himself associated in work with those very much younger and smaller than himself.

The conduct of the grade when formed is such that individual effort will result in advancement and promotion just as rapidly as the pupil's ability will permit, regardless of any set periods determined by time in the particular grade or season of the year, as in a school organized on the usual basis. This involves observation of the individual and attention to the individual. It results in saving of time to those who can least afford to waste a minute. To make the school of letters perfect, instruction in music, nature studies, and elementary agriculture, with some work in literature, is necessary. One of the features of such a school is the perfection of its equipment in every department. The result of grades conducted as described is more rapid advancement than is the rule in the common school; and that, too, in spite of the fact that no studying is done out of school hours and all pupils are untrained when received.

When the ground already covered has been traversed, one is accustomed to think that the end has been reached, so far as education is concerned. But if education is the development of the child, as we are now accustomed to proclaim, we are very far from the end of the route; for the every-day life and the atmosphere and spirit that envelops and controls it are more potent in bringing out what is best and developing proper standards of conduct than any set tasks. Groups of pupils of the same approximate age and physical development are associated in life in the cottage homes. The fact of their being of the same size frees the groups of the influence of the ideas that children have: that larger children are entitled to reverent imitation and obedience; and so the teaching of absolute social equality is possible. Individual rights, as well as individual limitations, and community rights and duties, are the daily food of out-of-doors and indoors experience. There can be no carrying of the family by storm, as it is too often the case "at home;" but, in place of that, there is found to exist an inexorable reign of law pro-

tecting each as much as the other and making life tolerable. The proper reverence for law and the limitations of the individual by social conditions are thus firmly established in the pupil's mind. Then, again, everything is conducted under the rule of doing the right thing in the right way. Play must be fair play, work must be honestly done, results must prove the correctness of the processes and processes must be commensurate with results sought. Effort alone cannot acquit the worker, and one's own approval, honest or assumed, does not acquit of responsibility. These are moral truths, and it is character building to impress them on a young mind. In the kind of school that we are considering, these truths are being concretely taught every day—yes, every hour.

Proper devotional observance at meals and at the beginning and close of the day, as well as appropriate services for moral instruction on Sunday, and whatever sectarian religious services may be possible, keep alive the appreciation of those higher obligations that most normal minds recognize as binding upon men.

What is to be said of those who are not backward in their studies and who have not suffered from irregular habits and associations? If they have reached the age of adolescence, it may be freely admitted that they are not juvenile delinquents, but juvenile criminals, as they have chosen their course of life deliberately after reaching an age of sufficient understanding to make intelligent choice.

Concerning the failure of the educational system to establish right character in a certain proportion of those who are subjected to its influence, it is hardly necessary to speak. For a certain proportion of abnormal, degenerate, or already fixed characters, are always found among those who belong to the non-social, or anti-social classes, whether they be adults or children. For them the term of their tuition in these schools is all too short to accomplish much permanent good, if, indeed, real betterment can ever be hoped for.

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